[10] It was his chamber-pot, filled with his own urine.

Chap. VII

[11] It was impossible to obtain definite data on the fertility of Bella Coola women, or on the period elapsing between marriage and the birth of the first child. Sterility is rare, though by no means unknown; on the other hand there are several families with as many as eight or nine children. The changed conditions which have followed the advent of the white man seem to have had little influence on the high birth rate, although infant mortality has increased enormously. Within the last few years this has happily diminished, so that the Bella Coola are now holding their own. Children are always desired, and although methods of abortion and infanticide have been known for many years, neither practice seems to have been sufficiently common to have produced an appreciable effect on the population.

Pregnancy usually occurs during the year following marriage. Though its actual dependence upon coition is fully realized, yet the Bella Coola, religiously minded in this as in all other aspects of life, ascribe the condition to the four

Mɛsmɛsälänux acting on the behest of Älquntäm. It is believed that the Carpenters carve out the child who is to be born in the same way that a human craftsman manufactures some complicated object. Most individuals do not theorize to any extent upon the course of biological development, but are content to assume that Älquntäm has made the coming birth possible.

During pregnancy the expectant mother must observe certain restrictions. If she chews gum, she will have a difficult delivery; if she eats salmon tails, the feet of the infant will appear before the head, and although skilled assistants can usually rotate a child, this is a painful process which should be avoided. If she walks on a beaver dam, or dips her head into a pool made by this animal, the birth of her infant will be blocked in the same way that the dam restrains a stream. This difficulty can be obviated, however, by dipping up the water with her hands instead of bending her head to the surface to drink. As far as possible, she must avoid being startled by small animals or reptiles; even if the excitement so caused is too slight to expel her own spirit, it may be sufficient to damage that of the foetus. Such dangers can be countered by a magical rite described in Chapter X. Her husband is also subject to certain injunctions and prohibitions. If he eat beaver meat his wife's delivery will be difficult. He must preserve a small piece of the skin or an eye of every animal that he kills; a few days after birth the child is steeped in the smoke of a fire on which these articles have been thrown. This prevents injury from the father's quarry.[1]

A pregnant woman continues to reside in her own house, where her condition is a source of interest to her friends and relatives. There are no midwives with inheritable professional prerogatives, but as the time for delivery draws near, arrangements are made for the mother or some other experienced female relative to be in attendance. It is quite proper for the husband to attend to this point, though it is customary for elderly female relations to do so, sometimes those of the wife, sometimes those of her husband. A woman who, having herself borne children, has assisted at many births with success, is often requested to be present, and it is

[1]This rite is described in detail on p. .

taken as a matter of course that she will be rewarded for her services.

When the pains of labour begin, the patient leaves the house with her assistant or assistants. In summer the party goes to some lonely spot in the woods where a rude wind-break may have been erected; in winter, to a sheltered spot beneath a house. No man can be present, a point in which the Bella Coola state that their culture differs from that of the Kwakiutl. The midwife manipulates the infant so that the birth is made as easy as possible. Women seldom experience difficulty and suffer, on the whole, less than do white mothers. It is believed that Sxaiaxwax, though invisible, is present on every occasion; the rendering of assistance at childbirth is his one kindly act.

The umbilical cord was formerly cut with a mussel shell, but for many years the use of a metal knife has been customary. The after-birth usually comes away easily, but if there is delay, hot ashes are placed around the feet and at the back of the woman to accelerate its expulsion. It is immediately buried or placed beneath a dense tree in the forest; if burnt, the infant will always be weakly. While one of the assistants disposes of it, another washes the new-born child. The cloths and dishes used for this purpose are burnt; failure to do so is believed to cause the child to become blind through a white film forming over the eyeballs. Then the mother and midwives return to the house with the infant, who is a source of tremendous interest to the community. It is proper for the father to recompense the attendants at once, in accordance with their skill and his generosity. A woman who has had several children often assists the daughter of a friend, then, as she gains more experience, her reputation grows and her help is more commonly sought. At the present time the sum of $2.50 would be considered suitable recompense for a fairly proficient midwife.

A new-born child takes the breast readily and a mother would be considered harsh indeed if she failed to suckle her infant whenever it cried, since scientific hours for feeding are not known. A child is wrapped in a shawl or a blanket and carried by the mother wherever she goes; when in the house it sprawls contentedly on the floor, unhampered by clothing. When the umbilical cord falls, it is preser-

welfare by magical means (page). The heavy infantile death rate of the Bella Coola cannot be attributed to lack of love or care on the part of parents, but the attention lavished is commonly not of the kind that assists a weakly child to survive the perils of infancy. During this period, the mother observes various magical taboos to ensure the welfare of her offspring, and endeavours to strengthen herself by rubbing her own body with non-odoriferous oils obtained from dog-fish, geese, or fresh olachen. Soft pounded salmon and water are added to an infant's diet as soon as possible, though nourishment from the breast frequently continues until a child is two, or even three years of age. It is not uncommon to delay weaning until the mother is again pregnant, when the child is deterred by the application of soot to the breasts. Marital relations are recommenced as soon as the mother is strong enough; there is no specified period of abstinence, nor does it matter whether or not the woman is lactative.

Occasionally, an infant is born with teeth; such an one is thought to be the reincarnation of a dead ancestor, though no one knows which. A similar belief is held respecting a child with dimples in the lobes of its ears; these are regarded as remnants of the holes pierced for ear-rings. A child that cries in the womb is said to have great intellect.

In former times infanticide was practised for various reasons. If a woman died in giving birth, it was customary for her mother to kill the child unless one of her relatives was able to suckle the motherless infant who was then given to her. It was not unknown for the mother of a large family to ask the midwife to kill the child in order to avoid an addition to her responsibilities. An unmarried girl who became pregnant often went alone to the forest, delivered herself without assistance, and killed her infant. This was considered to be the kindest act, since a fatherless child was said to be, "Like a Dog". In some cases the prospective mother requested a friend to cause abortionx by kneading the stomach and uterus, a method said to be effective and seldom fatal. How to do so is common knowledge, but to practise it is considered disgraceful, and the term ixwotł, applied to such an one, is among the most foul of Bella Coola opprobriums. It is believed that a woman who

has had several children can in some way ~~close the uterine passage and~~ prevent further conceptions by wriggling her body on her haunches immediately after the delivery of a child.

[12] Menstrual blood, like that which follows delivery, is unclean, especially that emitted at the first discharge. A woman who has just given birth is a sxaiäx; an adolescent girl, a sxyɛxwi, that is, "A Person not fully Tabooed"; the attitude with which the former is regarded is held, in a lesser extent, for the latter.

At the first indication, the girl asks a woman to inform her mother of her condition, and goes home immediately if she happens to be away at the time. Her parents at once make a small enclosure or bedroom of planks or matting in either of the front corners of the house, providing it with a trap-door and ladder by which she can leave without passing through the front door. There the girl must lie for four days, with legs close together and bent at the knees, never stretched out straight. She is not allowed to drink anything, and must eat sparingly; if she should consume much food, she would be greedy when an adult. When necessary for her to leave the enclosure, a woman must always accompany her. Her mother, or some other female relative, provides her with the usual soft cedar-bark pads. On the fifth day, she leaves her shelter early in the morning with one feminine friend and goes to a secluded pool back in the forest, where she washes for the first time. Then she runs rapidly through the woods, which has the effect of making her a strong woman. Should a girl fail to do this, she would be afflicted with an illness caused by the salmon, become blind, and die young.

For one year an adolescent girl is subject to many restrictions. Her near approach to the river would offend the salmon and cause them to avoid Bella Coola, so she is not allowed to draw water, or even to appear on the bank. She may not use the front-door facing the river, but has to leave the house through the trap beneath the enclosure where she sleeps. The Bella Coola consider it unthinkable for a girl to disregard these prohibitions, but if this should happen, she would be chased home by her parents, by the Guardian of the River, or, in fact, by any elderly member of the community. The strongest reason for respecting these regulations is the

belief that disobedience brings death; no one knows how it is inflicted, but a careless girl soon dies. During this period she cannot eat fresh salmon, though she is allowed them if they have been smoked for four or five days. Her scanty meals are brought to her in the enclosure where she is virtually a prisoner. It is true that she can leave it and wander in the woods, but her comrades avoid her as being in an unclean condition of which they are afraid, and she is barred from taking part in all activities on the river which constitute so large a part of the life of the Bella Coola. A girl cannot pick berries during this time, as no more would grow in the valley which she had thus defiled; she must not touch anyone, nor allow anyone to touch her; she must not pass in front of a man; she must go to bed before everyone else in the house, and be the last to arise. The danger of breaking some taboo is so great that it is safer for a girl to remain within her enclosure where her mother, and other old women, gather to tell her the many things which it is fitting for an adult woman to know. This seclusion is not pleasant, but it unquestionably serves to emphasize the importance of married life to which it is a prelude. The writer remembers an occasion when a Bella Coola family was eating tasty fresh salmon while one of the daughters, who had recently reached adolescence, watched enviously. Her grandfather rose and gave the child an orange, remarking that in his youth little girls did not receive such dainties to ameliorate their lot.

Adolescent girls wear certain distinctive articles of clothing and ornaments. The most noticeable is a skull-cap bound with grass; this is the only time in a woman's life that a hat is worn. She also wears ear-rings, each consisting of a neat bundle of four macaroni-shaped shells, probably Dentalium. These are said to have been imported from the north in early times. These marks serve to indicate the position of the girl, who is both feared and respected, possessed of supernatural power, and yet baneful. Many Bella Coola stories describe how adolescent girls have been able to vanquish supernatural beings; perhaps the most striking of these is the manner in which they saved mankind when the sun came too close to the earth. (Page) At the end of a year, or eleven months according to one old woman, the seclusion is terminated, and the girl resumes her normal activities. The first time

[13] Extra-Marital Relations Although the Bella Coola do not regard marriage pr

[13] Extra-Marital Relations

marily as a means of regulating relations between the sexes, yet the connection between the two is sufficiently close to warrant description in this chapter. A man considers intercourse as one of the normal phenomena of life: by marrying he has exclusive rights to his wife, but few moral restraints deter him from anyone else to whom he can gain access without infringing the prerogatives of some other husband. Moreover, sexual intercourse is not regarded solely as a gratification of desires; it has a significance which can be described, not inaptly, as holy. As already explained, two favourite methods of obtaining success in any undertaking are by preserving lengthy continence or by observing ceremonial chastity. If a young unmarried man or widower should wish to make use of this latter means, he is compelled to have relations with a woman to whom he has no just claims. This is universally recognized, nor is there the slightest odium attached to the man. The only essential is that he neither violate another's wife, nor force a young girl against her will.

At the present time there is great laxity in Bella Coola, a condition which makes it difficult to judge the state of affairs fifty years ago. Every effort was made to obtain satisfactory evidence, and the following was verified and re-verified with the older men.

A wife, properly married with full ceremony, is usually faithful and cases of rape are either unknown or very rare. The daughters of chiefs, too, are guarded with great care and any effort to seduce one of them would be punished by her father. The parents of a girl used to watch her carefully, and the opportunity for immorality was not great in the days when everyone went to bed at sundown except on the occasion of a ceremonial dance. As one informant described it:

"The daughters of chiefs used to be looked after as if they were in boxes, cherished and guarded by their parents and relatives. No one would dream of molesting them. And a chief's daughter used to be proud and look after herself. Nowadays, girls don't care, and everything has become degraded".

If the daughter of a chief did demean herself, the parents lost interest in her, as one who was spoilt. It was always assumed that a girl of rank was a virg at marriage, and if it was discovered that she had been living an immoral life,

her husband in many cases returned her in disgrace to her parents who, equally shamed, were expected to return to him the goods he had expended for their daughter. Loss of virtue was judged only from indirect information. If the daughter of a chief was found pregnant before marriage, she was almost ostracized by her family. No ceremonial marriage could be arranged for her, and the child could not be cleansed from the stigma of illegitimacy.

On the other hand it appears certain that there was a good deal of intercourse in the old days between chiefs and slave women, or even between slaves and the daughters of chiefs. In the latter case the woman was often cast aside by her relatives though they sometimes yielded to the inevitable and tried to wash away the disgrace with gifts. At the same time, public opinion was unfavourable to a man who consorted with many women, or to a woman who allowed herself to be at the disposal of many men. Any regular union of masters with their slave women for the purpose of having children was unknown. A girl's consent was always necessary, given either personally or through an intermediary. Even a chief hesitated to force his attentions on a slave woman if she objected, although her refusal would be most unusual on account of his prestige. There were no professional prostitutes; a man usually gave a small present to a girl from whom he had received favours, and she was expected to give him a little, dainty basket filled with undyed cedar-bark to use as a sponge. Such relations appear always to have been of common occurrence. ~~Xxxxxxxx~~ To-day, as formerly, a man's morality is considered to be his own affair; laxity may lower his prestige, but no law is broken, and his neighbours laugh and chaff him about it. In fact, sexual matters are discussed with the greatest freedom, and a person who has been caught is mocked mercilessly. When visiting a foreign tribe, a man sometimes lives with a woman and, on parting, composes and sings a song describing her charms. One man did this after living with a Kitlobe woman, and on his return to Bella Coola found that some of his fellows had learnt it in some unexplained manner; they used to sing it to him, much to their amusement, in part to his own, and somewhat to the annoyance of his wife. This perhaps illustrates rather clearly the attitude of the Bella Coola to infractions of morality ---- where no marriage rite has been bro-

ken; it is amusing rather than disgusting. There are no times when the moral code ceases to function. At potlatches, and also at kusiut dances, there appears always to have been a certain amount of ~~vice~~ laxity, although this was strictly prohibited within the house where the ceremony was taking place. Such behaviour is due to the excitement and stimulus of a large gathering, not to anything connected with the rites themselves.

Perverted sexual desires, like other matters connected with the relations of the sexes, are regarded as concerning the individual alone. Sodomy appears to be unknown. Intercourse by pre-adolescents is held to be disgusting, but carries with it no social ostracism. Incestuous union, however, is mildly anti-social; it exposes the offender to secret contempt, but does not interfere with his attainment of whatever position his wealth and influence may have won for him. One or two instances are known of contact between parent and child, a matter in which it is the duty of no one to interfere; if a person thus flouts public opinion, it is his own affair.

In view of the firmness of the marriage bond and the absence of professional prostitutes, it is difficult to explain the wholesale exodus of Bella Coola women to Victoria forty or fifty years ago. In some peculiar manner this came to be regarded as socially proper. The daughters both of chiefs and commoners trooped off for a varying period of months or years, and those who returned brought back venereal diseases which appear to have been unknown before that date. Few of them bore children afterwards, a factor of prime importance in estimating the reasons for the decline of the Bella Coola. The motives which led the women to the city seem to have been: (1) the desire for wealth; (2) the influence of strong liquor; (3) the lure of a strange environment; (4) the attraction of the white men, universally regarded as persons of higher culture.

It is indeed fortunate for the Bella Coola that this fatal custom has ceased to be considered estimable, although the harm already done may be irremediable.